

November 7, 1958

Professor T. Caspersson  
Inst. for Cell Research and Genetics  
Karolinska Institutet  
Stockholm 60, Sweden

Dear Professor Caspersson:

Thank you so much for your message of the 31st of October. I am asking George Klein to give us whatever information we may need on the practical questions of the Presentation Ceremony, but if you can anticipate any further assistance we would be very happy for it. You must realize that we have had no experience whatsoever with such formal occasions.

If it will be your responsibility to present my work at the Festival, the enclosed summaries may perhaps be of some further use to you in preparing the material. I am, of course, a little embarrassed at being singled out for recognition in a field where so many other workers have made such important contributions, although I am sure that every scientist will well recognize the situation. The question of transduction in particular has been the product of many minds and in fact the first experimental work on this was anticipated many years before by Griffith in his early studies on the pneumococcus transformation. It is perhaps true to say that many of us did not fully realize the significance of this phenomenon until about the time of the studies on salmonella with use of bacteriophage as the vector. I have tried to make a careful historical view of this question in my article in the July 1956 issue of the American Scientist. I trust that a copy of this publication was routinely sent to you some time ago. My remarks on this question and intent in sending the enclosed summary are merely intended to be helpful, in explaining my own outlook on the development of the question, and they may well be superfluous from your own point of view.

I would not want to mar the splendor, warmth and dignity of the present occasion by making more than a feeble remark in this direction, but if I had any criticism at all to offer of the system of Nobel Awards it would be precisely that they place a difficult burden of emphasis on the achievements of a single individual which is somewhat contrary to the actual cooperative development of scientific knowledge.

My greatest delight in the present occasion is the sense of fellowship that it affords, on the one hand with my friends and co-recipients of the Awards this year, and on the other with my Swedish colleagues to whom I am very grateful for the undue honor they have now bestowed.

Yours Cordially,

Joshua Lederberg

JL/mk